

Breakout Session 2 (1:00 – 2:00)



Anxiety and Autism Gym/Auditorium/Main Space

Dr. Kurt Michael – Appalachian State University Department of Psychology

Many individuals who have been diagnosed autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) also struggle with impairments related to anxiety. However, these co-existing syndromes, especially if not recognized, can complicate the treatment of both ASDs and anxiety disorders.

Dr. Kurt Michael is the Stanley R. Aeschleman Distinguished Professor and Assistant Chairperson of Psychology at Appalachian State University. He teaches at the undergraduate and graduate levels and his primary areas of research are school mental health, suicide prevention, the treatment of anxiety and depression, and rural healthcare. Dr. Michael currently serves as the Associate Editor of the Journal of Rural Mental Health, Associate Editor of the Journal of Child and Family Studies and is the Editor (JP Jameson, Co-Editor) of the first edition of The Handbook of Rural School Mental Health (Springer).



Creating Social Narratives to Guide Understanding of Social Situations and Expectations/Room 1

Dr. Emily Lakey – Appalachian State University Department of Communications Sciences & Disorders

Social narratives are visual stories that provide information about social situations in order to support understanding of social contexts and expectations. This session will provide an overview of social narratives using real-life examples from a variety of social contexts.

Emily Lakey, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Appalachian State University. She has over 10 years of experience working with individuals on the autism spectrum as a speech-language pathologist in school and community settings.



Evidence-Based and Promising Practices Related to Behavioral Concerns in Early Childhood/Room 2

Dr. Debra Prykanowski – Appalachian State University Department of Reading & Special Education

This session will include a discussion on the function of problem behavior for young children with autism. Common evidence-based practices for addressing the function of behavior, decreasing problem behavior and increasing appropriate behaviors will be presented.

Dr. Prykanowski is an Assistant Professor in the Special Education department at Appalachian State University. She recently graduated from the University of Florida with her doctorate in Special Education with a concentration in early childhood studies. Her research expertise and interests are in problem behavior and function-based interventions.

Breakout Session 2 (1:00 – 2:00) Continued



Nutritional Support Room 3

Dr. Melissa Gutchall – Appalachian State University Nutrition and Foods Program

This session will review the available evidence on nutritional concerns and dietary strategies for children with autism spectrum disorder, with a specific focus on research results regarding mealtime behaviors and gastrointestinal disorders reported by families in Watauga County. Group discussion will help facilitate next steps in developing nutrition-related resources for local families.

Dr. Gutschall is an Associate Professor in Nutrition at Appalachian State University and has been a Registered Dietitian for 18 years. She has practiced with an interdisciplinary team serving rural children with special needs in the Appalachian Region for the past 13 years.



Sexuality Education for Students with IDD Room 4

Mary McKinney, MA, LMFT – McKinney Marriage & Family Therapy, Boone NC

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, with and without autism, need education about their own physical development (i.e. puberty) and caring for their sexual health and well-being. This presentation will address concerns around providing that education to students with IDD. Attendees will be given access codes to a set of online modules to aid parents in talking about this subject with their children.

Mary received her BA in Psychology from Duke University in 1989 and her MA in Marriage and Family Therapy from Appalachian State University in 1997. Her private practice, McKinney Marriage & Family Therapy, has been in the Boone area since 2001. One of her areas of specialty is intimacy and sexuality, including emerging sexuality and concerns within relationships. Mary is an Our Whole Lives (OWL): Lifespan Sexuality Education facilitator and has co-facilitated this curriculum with two cohorts of middle-school children in Watauga County and is preparing to start with a third group.